

# EVENTS CALENDAR

Spring Conference

## THE NATURE OF WAR: AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTS AND WORLD WAR II



From Friday, February 26, 2016 - 8:00AM

To Saturday, February 27, 2016 - 1:30PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Ave | Room 120 Columbus, OH 43201

[Register here for this event](#)

Organized by Nicholas Breyfogle (The Ohio State University), Peter Mansoor (The Ohio State University), Richard Tucker (University of Michigan), and Thomas Robertson (Worcester Polytechnic Institute)

*"When we send an expedition to Sicily, where does it begin? Well it begins at two places practically. It begins on the farms of this country, and in the mines of this country.*

*-- Franklin Roosevelt after the invasion of Sicily, July 1943*

[See full conference agenda](#)

Wars dramatically remake landscapes and militarize environments, even far from battle zones. No war transformed natural environments as much as World War II, a total, global conflict that saw massive fighting across two continents and two oceans and drew resources from around the planet. Until now the discussion of "total war" — the state's capacity to mobilize all human and natural resources for the military effort — has not engaged the underlying environmental dimensions, even though total war entails massive and even transformative interventions into natural systems.

More than any previous war, World War II achieved this mobilization in many countries. The United States played a decisive role in that war and the story of its astoundingly rapid acceleration of military capacity is well known. Yet the environmental dimension of American involvement has hardly been explored until now.

This workshop and the resulting edited volume will examine American involvement in World War II through an environmental lens, focusing on how the war reshaped American landscapes, institutions, and environmental thinking, and how wartime developments helped shape the contours of postwar American environments and environmental thinking.

It will also explore the ways in which American environmental endowments structured and delimited the U.S. war effort — that is, how nature and natural resources (quantities, types, locations, accessibility, etc.) set the parameters for what is possible in total war and both directly and indirectly determine tactics and strategies. In exploring the case of World War II, the workshop will delve into broad questions of the relationship among environment, war, and security, both in the United States and globally.

The aim is an edited volume that will be engaging enough for undergraduates and general readers but deep enough for scholars. It will interest students of World War II, military history, international relations, and environmental history and studies.

In exploiting the United States' rich resource base, the massive application of American industrial power and the militarization of environments and technologies were critical to Allied victory in the war. In this "gross national product" war, we will probe how natural resource considerations factored into American military and diplomatic strategy.



Nicholas Breyfogle  
Associate Professor of  
History  
The Ohio State University



Peter Mansoor  
Gen. Raymond E. Mason Jr.  
Chair in Military History  
The Ohio State University

We will survey where U.S. strategic materials came from, both within the national borders and beyond. How did equipping a huge military operation and supplying Allies reshape American environments and source areas far afield? What were the environmental costs of that industrial expansion, including the accumulating toxic pollution left as a post-war legacy, in emergency circumstances where the immediate environmental consequences could hardly be taken into account? How were mining and forestry intensified and reshaped?

## Key Questions

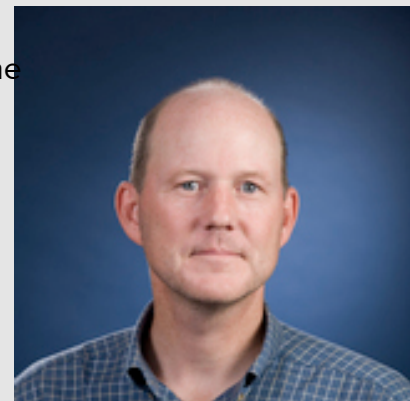


Richard Tucker  
Adjunct Professor in the  
School of Natural Resources  
and Environment  
University of Michigan

- In what ways did nature and natural resources shape practices, events, and ideas during the war?
- How did nature and natural resources shape American military strategy or larger war policy? How important was nature to the history of World War II?
- What new resource mobilization methods, economic patterns, technologies, institutions, and ideas regarding nature emerged during the war? What seeds of future changes were planted?
- How did the relationship between the state and nature shift because of the war?
- How did the war and war imperatives transform American landscapes? What were the "changes in the land"? What new spatial or geographical arrangements emerged?
- Was the war purely a declension story (for nature) or are there other narrative frames that make more sense?

- What were the social and cultural politics of these changes?
- Is the concept of militarized landscapes useful? What other metaphors describe wartime changes in the relations between people and nature?
- Ultimately, how transformative was the war in environmental history of the U.S. in the 20th century? Would the changes you examined have developed no matter what?

## Workshop Participants and Papers [all titles are open to revision]



Thomas Robertson  
Associate Professor in the  
Humanities and Arts  
Worcester Polytechnic  
Institute

- Brian Black (Pennsylvania State University, Altoona), "Petroleum and the War"
- Kent Curtis (The Ohio State University, Mansfield), "Alloys and Allies: World War II, Mineral Scarcity and Post War Foreign Policy"
- Jean A. Mansavage (U.S. Air Force History Office), "For Land's Sake: Acquiring and Using Property for Military and War Production Purposes during World War II"
- Sarah Elkind (San Diego State University), "Wartime Industry and Urban Environments"
- Christopher Wells (Macalester College), "Planes, Trains, Automobiles, and Trucks: World War II, American Transportation, and the Environment"
- Anastasia Day (University of Delaware), "Growing Factories: Industrial Modernity and the Environment in World War II American Victory Gardens"
- Joel R. Bius (Air Command and Staff College, Alabama), "Smoke 'Em if You've Got 'Em: Environmental, Agricultural, and Industrial Implications of Cigarette Consumption in World War II"
- Derek Lee Nelson (University of New Hampshire), "Protecting the Shoreline: Marine Woodborers, Coastal Landscapes, and Shifting Baselines, 1920-1960"
- Martha Gardner (MCPHS University, Boston), "'Germicidal Gold Rush': The Invention, Promotion and Legacy of Hexachlorophene in American Hygiene Products"
- Thomas Robertson (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), "Total War and the Total Environment: World War II and American Conservationists"
- Roger Lotchin (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)

## Summary and Conclusions

- Richard Tucker (University of Michigan)

## Participants Not Able to Make the Workshop

- Kendra Smith Howard (SUNY Albany), "Soldiers of the Soil: Agriculture and the Rural Environment in World War II"
- Kate Brown (University of Maryland-Baltimore County), "Nuclear Landscapes and Science"
- Charles E. Closmann (University of North Florida, Jacksonville), "'Through Green Tinted Glasses': Military Environmentalism and Public Opinion in Florida"
- Gerard J. Fitzgerald (George Mason University), "The Biologists' War: Biological Warfare and the Limits of Environment Annihilation during World War II"